

Story 1477 (1989 Tape 9)

Narrator: Mustafa Şahin, 40,  
telephone technician

Location: Demirli village,  
Akçadağ kaza,  
Malatya Province

Date: May 1989

Civilian Suffering during Two Wars

My family were farmers. When my grandfather on my mother's side of the family was sent to the Russian front during World War I, my grandmother became the sole support of her family. She was a radiant<sup>1</sup> woman from Dereli village. Despite the fact that she was a tiny and dainty woman, she was also a very strong and firm person. During the war years, she was rearing six children by herself without help from anyone. She had no ox with which to plow the land, but she managed to plow it by hand, and with the crops she raised she fed her six children without receiving any other supplies.

My father was her son. When she was 110 years old she left this world for the next world.<sup>2</sup> That was in 1965, and we visited her during that year before she died. While we were

<sup>1</sup>There is some question about the translation here. The word that the narrator used was zühire. Several translators were of the opinion that this was a variant of zühur, which means bright, brilliant, or blooming and beautiful. There is a belief that the skin of especially beautiful people has a slight glow. This quality was attributed to some ancient goddesses. See Motif F574.1 Resplendent beauty. See also Walker and Uysal, Tales Alive in Turkey, p. 56.

<sup>2</sup>As he does in some of his other tales, this narrator does not say literally that a person left this world for the next one. He says that the deceased "changed worlds." If one were not

## Story 1477

with her, she told us several stories of things that she experienced in earlier years. She said to me one day, "My son, can you understand how hard I had to work to rear six children, one of whom became an educator?" But that son was killed in an accident in 1946, when he was twenty-six or twenty-seven years old, and I was born after the time of death.<sup>3</sup> His name was Mustafa, and so they named me Mustafa after him

My grandmother really experienced some terribly difficult times during the war years. She said, "I suffered many difficulties not only during World War I but also during the War of Independence."<sup>4</sup> There was not a single able-bodied man left in our village, for they had all been taken into the military forces. There used to be many bandits who plundered villages where only women and children lived.<sup>5</sup> These bandits took all familiar with this figure of speech for death, one could possibly interpret it as referring to a geographical shift.

<sup>3</sup>If the deceased son was twenty-six at the time of his death in 1946, he was born in 1920. If she was 110 years old in 1965, then she was at least 64 years at the time of his birth--perhaps possible but quite unlikely.

<sup>4</sup>In this war (1920-1922) a huge Greek army (supported by British, French, and Italian supplies) invaded Turkey, which lay in defeat at the end of World War I. Greatly outmatching feeble Turkish defenses, it advanced almost to Ankara before it was turned back and routed by Atatürk.

<sup>5</sup>The narrator neglects to say that much of the plunder and massacres of helpless villagers were carried on by Armenian bandits.

## Story 1477

of whatever they wanted. Several times they robbed me of everything I had, but after the Republic of Turkey was founded by Atatürk, after the end of the War of Independence, these bandits disappeared from the scene. Thanks to Allah that there was a leader like Atatürk. He led the country into peaceful relations with the rest of the world, and as a result many other nations gained a new respect for Turkey." My grandmother explained to me how much their lives had been changed by the coming of Atatürk. His founding of the Republic helped Turks to forget their long, long period of suffering and the great pains they had endured during the war years.

My grandmother told me one story of her troubles before the time of the Republic, and I remember very clearly what she said. "One day when I had just finished harvesting a crop, a bandit named Lalık Mahmut came to my farm. He came to steal my crop, but he refused to say a word to me. He spoke only to my crop. 'Selamünaleyküm,<sup>6</sup> crop. My children are dying of hunger, and therefore I shall take you to my house.'" In other words, he ignored my grandmother completely. She then said to me, "Thanks to Allah, our people were able to fight for their

<sup>6</sup>"Peace be unto you," usually answered by "Aleykümselam"- "And may peace be unto you, too." This exchange of greetings is often made by Moslems who do not know each other well; it is sometimes a means of testing the attitude of an unknown person.

Story 1477

freedom and establish the Republic of Turkey. Now everyone  
free person." We really had become free by that early  
in the twentieth century